



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: March 5, 2013

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**SUBJECT:** INFORMATION REPORT  
Thornhill Revitalization Area  
Land Use Study: Summary and Discussion of the  
Recommendations of the Working Group and City  
Staff/Consultant  
File PR 11 127722

**PREPARED BY:** Ron Blake M.C.I.P. , R.P.P.  
Development Manager, West District

**REVIEWED BY:** Biju Karumanchery M.C.I.P. , R.P.P.  
Senior Development Manager

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- (1) That the report entitled: "INFORMATION REPORT, Thornhill Revitalization Area Land Use Study: Summary and Discussion of the Working Group and City Staff/Consultant Recommendations; File PR 11 127722," be received;
- (2) That the new Draft Official Plan policies pertaining to the Thornhill Revitalization Area be based on the points of agreement between the City Staff /Consultant recommendations and the recommendations of the Working Group;
- (3) That the Development Services Committee and Council provide direction to staff on the key points of difference between City Staff and the Working Group recommendations, specifically in regard to the following matters:
  - a) *In the Thornhill Revitalization Area, excluding the former Canac site:* Include provisions for new manufacturing, assembly and warehousing (but a prohibition on auto-body repair shops), in the new Official Plan, subject to individual Zoning By-law Amendments (the Staff/Consultant recommendation); versus prohibition of manufacturing, assembly and warehousing, and auto-body repair shops in the new Official Plan (the Working Group recommendation);
  - b) *On the former Canac Kitchens property, achieving transition between the core employment lands to the west and the existing residential neighbourhood to the east by:* Promoting the redevelopment of the site for high-order, low-impact employment uses but no residential permissions (e.g. low rise office uses with ancillary service commercial uses) (the Staff recommendation); versus provisions for mixed use redevelopment (e.g. ground-oriented residential with at grade commercial uses along John Street and Green Lane) (the Working Group recommendation);
- (4) And That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary and discussion of the alternative recommendations proposed by the Thornhill Revitalization Area Working Group and City Staff/Consultant on future land use policies for the Thornhill Revitalization Area. Council direction is required relative to the policies for this Area to be incorporated into the Draft new Official Plan.

Generally, as it applies to the **core of the Thornhill Revitalization Area** (i.e. excluding the former Canac site), both parties recommend a continuation of employment uses, with a gradual transition from “heavy industry” to higher-order service employment uses (e.g. office, service, professional and appropriately-scaled commercial uses) and a focus on improvements to the public realm and individual property maintenance. However, there are several key differences between the two recommendations, as follows:

- City Staff recommend that new manufacturing, assembly and warehousing uses be provided for in the Official Plan, subject to review and consideration through individual Zoning By-law Amendment applications (i.e. these uses would not be permitted as-of-right but may be considered through a rezoning process to the satisfaction of Council). This approach would provide an opportunity for Staff and Council to thoroughly review the individual impacts and appropriateness of each application on its own merits with requirements for statutory public meeting(s);
- The Working Group recommends that manufacturing, assembly, and warehousing uses be prohibited in the Official Plan. (It should be noted that both the Working Group and Staff propose that new auto-body shops not be permitted in the Official Plan). Under this approach both Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments would be required if an applicant wanted to develop such uses on a site.
- The Working Group report proposes new housing in “appropriate locations”. Staff would strongly caution against any blanket permission for residential redevelopment in the area, as it could very well lead to greater uncertainty and instability. The planned function of this area remains as an employment area in the current and Draft new Official Plans. Under Provincial Policy, the conversion of employment lands can only be considered in the context of a Comprehensive Municipal Review and the new Official Plan review has determined that Markham’s current employment lands (plus employment lands in the urban expansion area) are required to meet employment targets to 2031. This policy context for the area could be revisited if Metrolinx were to develop a new GO Station at John Street in the future. However, the possible introduction of residential uses across the area would best be addressed through a future Municipal Comprehensive Review of employment land supply, future transit station locations and related Official Plan policies.

With regard to the **former Canac property**, both sets of recommendations identify the need to create an appropriate transition between the core of the revitalization area to the west and the existing neighbourhood to the east. The key differences between the recommendations are as follows:

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- The City Staff/Consultant report recommends that this transition be accommodated through low-impact employment uses (such as low-rise offices and small scale retail/commercial uses) with no provision for residential; whereas,
  - The Working Group report recommends that the transition occur through redevelopment of the site for low-rise mixed use residential with at-grade commercial uses along John Street and Green Lane and an Open Space area within the redevelopment.
  - Both reports recommend that new manufacturing and auto-related uses be prohibited on the Canac site.

**BACKGROUND:****Study Area and Surrounding Context**

The Thornhill Revitalization Area (the Study Area) is bounded by two CN Rail lines on the west and south and the Aileen-Willowbrook neighbourhood to the north and east (see Figure 1). It is an older, mixed employment area comprised of industrial, service, retail and commercial uses including several auto body repair shops. Raywal Kitchens, a kitchen cabinet manufacturer and the former Canac Kitchens site, now vacant, are located in the area.

**Study Process to Date**

In February 2011, Council endorsed terms of reference for the Thornhill Revitalization Area Working Group, consisting of residents and members of the local business community; Mayor Scarpitti; Councillor Shore (Chair); and members of the Thornhill Subcommittee.

A series of Working Group meetings and two Public Information Meetings were held between October 2011 and May 2012. On October 23, 2012, Staff presented a recommendation report on future land use in the Study Area. A separate report from the Working Group was also received by Development Service Committee at this meeting, as well as deputations from the public. At the October meeting, Development Services Committee directed that another Public Information Meeting be held to provide further opportunity for the recommendations to be presented and discussed in public. This Public Information Meeting was held on January 22, 2013 (See Appendix A for minutes of the meeting). A number of Development Services Committee members were also in attendance. As this was a public information meeting and not part of a formal Development Services Committee meeting, no direction was given to staff at this meeting.

**DISCUSSION:**

The following chart provides a summary of the Working Group and Staff/Consultant's key recommendations:

	<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Staff/Consultant</b>
<p><b>General land use objectives, principles, strategies and policies (excluding Canac Kitchens Site, see Figure 1 for location):</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote retail/commercial/ office uses that encourage increased neighbourhood and visitor patronage</li> <li>• Encourage more housing in appropriate locations</li> <li>• Promote “Environmental Leadership” among existing and new businesses</li> <li>• Enhance buffers/separation/ landscaping between existing residential and new/ redeveloped uses</li> <li>• Create safe, walkable streets, greener public spaces, connectivity between residential and employment areas</li> <li>• Use Community Improvement as a tool to promote redevelopment and physical improvements</li> <li>• Promote reuse of vacant buildings as business incubators/space for small businesses and new businesses that enhance area and are compatible with adjacent uses</li> <li>• Promote enhanced property maintenance</li> <li>• Monitor environmental approvals in the area with a quarterly report to General Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop planning policies that support transition to higher order employment uses</li> <li>• No recommendation for new housing</li> <li>• Restrict new uses or expansion of existing uses that are incompatible with surrounding residential</li> <li>• Enhance buffers/separation/ landscaping between existing residential and new/ redeveloped uses</li> <li>• Improve streets/ lighting/ street trees/sidewalks along boulevards and improved connectivity between residential and employment areas</li> <li>• Use Community Improvement/ BIA designation to promote redevelopment and physical improvements</li> <li>• Market area as a “Centre for Innovation”; identify the area with a distinct name; promote clean, low-impact employment uses</li> <li>• Promote enhanced property maintenance</li> <li>• Monitor environmental approvals in the area</li> </ul>

	<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Staff/Consultant</b>
<p><b>Specific land use recommendations (excluding Canac site):</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit new uses to offices, research, galleries, banks/financial, trade/commercial schools, retail as accessory or ancillary uses, motor vehicle sales, fitness centres, services, and restaurants</li>   <li>• Not specifically mentioned</li>   <li>• Prohibit auto body shops, auto repair, commercial self-storage, accessory outdoor storage, manufacturing, any other use not specifically mentioned in list of permitted uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of right permission (ie could proceed without Zoning Amendment) for service uses, offices, banks/financial, trade/commercial schools, ancillary retail as “as of right” uses</li>   <li>• Discretionary permission (i.e. through Zoning Amendment) for manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, restaurants, banquet halls, private clubs and fitness centres, day care centres, motor vehicle sales</li>   <li>• Any land use not specifically permitted in the list of permitted uses would require an Official Plan Amendment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Land use objectives, principles, strategies and policies for Canac Kitchens Site:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a transition between existing residential and employment uses through redevelopment of this site</li>   <li>• Propose mixed use low density, low-rise (generally 2 storey) residential with commercial/retail along John St and Green Lane</li>   <li>• Prohibit new industrial uses and auto-oriented uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a transition between existing residential and employment uses through redevelopment of this site</li>   <li>• Propose low rise mixed use office and small scale retail/commercial uses (generally 2-3 storey). No recommendation for residential uses on Canac site</li>   <li>• Prohibit new industrial and auto-body uses</li> </ul>

	<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Staff/Consultant</b>
<b>Land use objectives, principles, strategies and policies for Canac Kitchens Site (con't):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transition to residential uses to the east through urban design and landscaping guidelines, building massing and heights and building setbacks</li> <li>• Provide open space on the site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transition to residential uses to the east through urban design and landscaping guidelines building massing and heights and requirement for building setbacks</li> <li>• Open space not mentioned. Residential uses not proposed</li> </ul>

**Many areas of agreement between the two reports**

Both sets of recommendations:

- Acknowledge that some of the existing uses in the employment area are incompatible with adjacent residential but both recognize that these uses have a legal right to continue if they were legally established and predated any subsequent zoning;
- Emphasize the importance of improving sidewalks, boulevards, planting street trees and related public realm improvements as a potential catalyst for revitalization of the study area;
- Emphasize that improvements to individual property maintenance, and enforcement of existing City by-laws and standards will play a key role in improving the area;
- Support the use of additional tools including Community Improvement Plans and possibly designation of a local Business Improvement Area as further strategy to promote revitalization;
- Support strategic efforts to market the area’s potential as a “Centre for Innovation” and location for incubator or small start-up businesses with a focus on clean, low impact uses;
- Support the Study Area (excluding the Canac Site in the case of the Working Group recommendations) remaining as an employment area but evolving into a centre for higher order, low-impact employment uses with the addition of appropriately-scaled and compatible office, commercial and retail uses.
- Support the prohibition of new uses that will have undesirable or noxious impacts on surrounding residential uses including open storage.
- Promote the ongoing monitoring of the environmental conditions of new and existing businesses in the area.

**Some contrasts between the lists of permitted uses outside of the Canac Site:**

- Generally, both reports emphasize a vision of the area transitioning from “heavy industry” to a service oriented employment area consisting more predominantly of office, service, and appropriately scaled commercial and retail uses that typically have lower impacts on surrounding uses than traditional manufacturing;

- However, the Working Group recommends outright prohibition of manufacturing/assembly, warehousing (including self-storage warehousing) and auto repair uses, which would render all existing uses in this category “legal non-conforming”. This strategy would allow legal non-conforming uses to remain in their current form. Applications for expansion of existing uses would involve applications to the Committee of Adjustment. Applications for new uses in these categories would require an Official Plan Amendment in addition to a Zoning Amendment. On reflection, staff can support this approach as it relates to auto repair uses, but not for manufacturing, assembly and warehousing uses in an employment area (see next bullet point, below).
- The Staff/Consultant report proposes to place manufacturing, assembly and warehousing into the “discretionary use” category, which would require approval of a Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA). The ZBA process is a public process with statutory requirements for public meetings and notification. The inclusion of appropriate criteria in Official Plan policies, addressing the criteria and circumstances under which expansion or new uses would be appropriate (or inappropriate) would, with the additional requirement of a zoning amendment process, provide very strong safeguards against the inappropriate expansion or redevelopment of these uses, in staff’s opinion.
- The Working Group report also proposes to encourage new housing in “appropriate locations”. Staff would strongly caution against any blanket permission for residential redevelopment in the area, as it could very well lead to greater uncertainty and instability in the area. This could in turn result in reduced property investment and lower maintenance standards by local businesses during what would likely be a very extended and unpredictable land use transition period. Also, an extended and unpredictable series of site-specific redevelopments from employment to residential uses would only increase, not resolve, the land use incompatibilities in the area. Both the Working Group and City Staff recommend that the planned function of this area remain as an employment area in the current and Draft new Official Plans. Under Provincial Policy, the conversion of employment lands can only be considered in the context of a Comprehensive Municipal Review and the current Official Plan has determined that Markham’s current employment lands (plus employment lands in the urban expansion area) are required to meet employment targets to 2031. This consideration could be revisited if Metrolinx were to develop plans for a GO Station at John Street. However, given that Metrolinx has advised that they have no plans to initiate a transit station study at this time, any further consideration of residential uses into the area would best be addressed through a future Municipal Comprehensive Review of employment land supply, transit station locations and related Official Plan policies.

#### **A range of options for the Canac Site**

- Both sets of recommendations emphasize the need to promote compatible, low impact, development on the Canac site in the future with a focus on land uses and building forms that will provide a good transition between employment uses to the north and west and adjacent residential.

- Both recommend that new manufacturing and automotive uses be prohibited on the Canac site.
- The staff report proposes to accomplish these objectives by restricting uses on the Canac site to uses such as office and small retail or commercial businesses. If appropriately designed and sited, these uses can be entirely compatible with residential.
- The Working Group report proposes to address these objectives through mixed use redevelopment of the site to residential with some commercial uses.
- If the Committee chooses to adopt the Working Group recommendation, staff would recommend that site-specific policies for the Canac site include strong guidelines for the future mixed-use redevelopment of the site that would address a variety of matters, including:
  - The need for an adequate transition on the Canac site between residential uses and employment uses to the west
  - The need for a road connection between John Street and Green Lane that could incorporate a mix of uses – including street-related commercial
  - The need to incorporate street-related commercial in mixed use buildings fronting on both John and Green Lane
  - The need for open space amenities on the site
  - Restriction of buildings to low rise (generally 2 – 3 storey), ground-oriented forms .

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)**

Not applicable at this time.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable at this time.

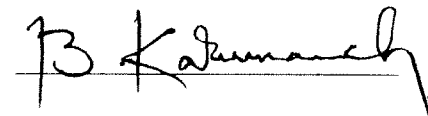
**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The matters addressed in this report would promote the reuse, revitalization and intensification of an existing employment area in keeping with growth management objectives.

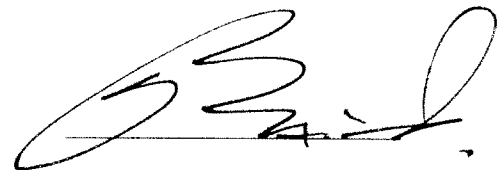
**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Not applicable

**RECOMMENDED  
BY:**



Biju Karumanchery M.C.I.P. R.P.P.  
Senior Development Manager



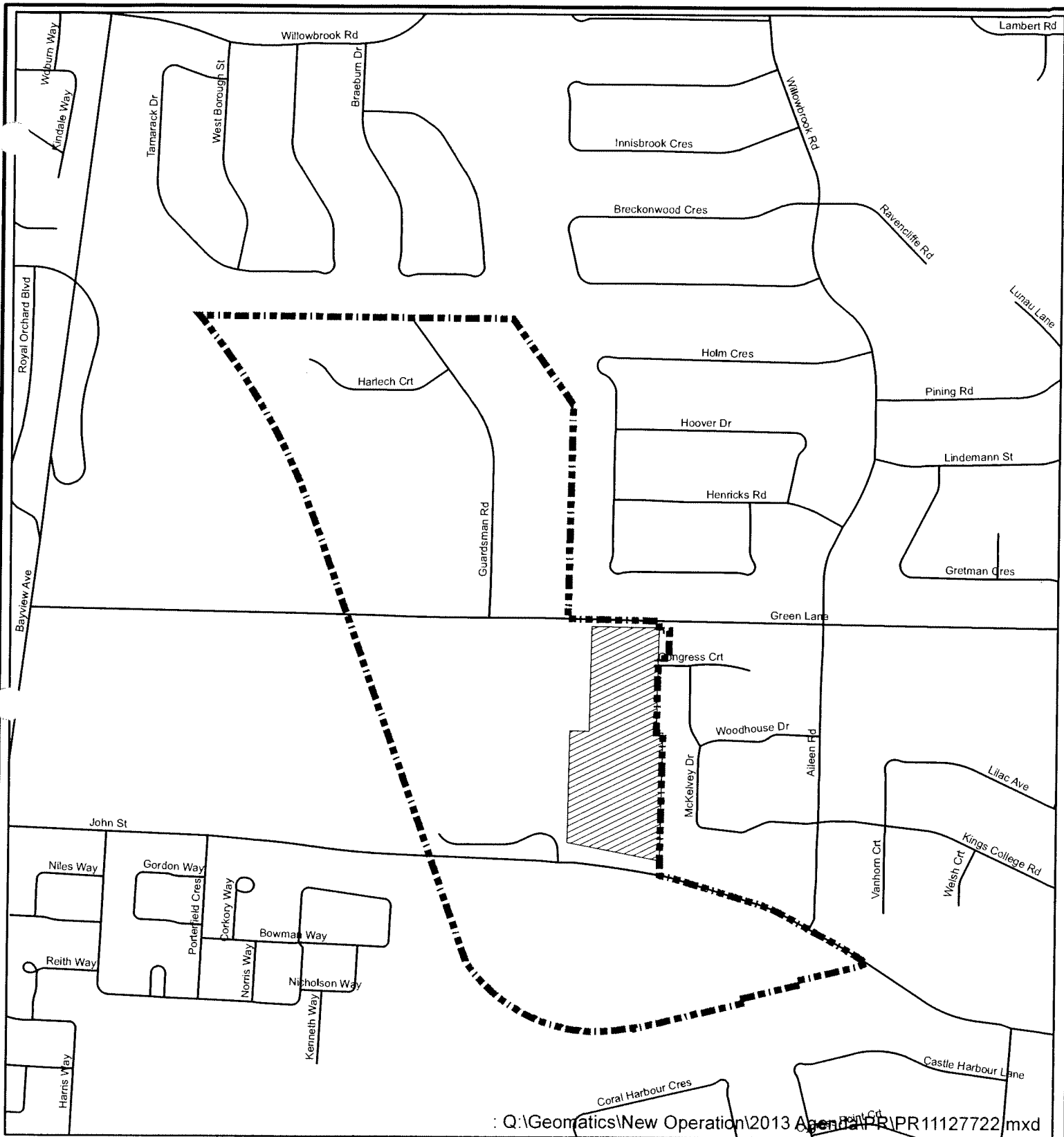
Jim Baird M.C.I.P. R.P.P.  
Commissioner Development  
Services

**ATTACHMENTS**

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Figure 1 – Study Area





# THORNLEA REVITALIZATION STUDY

■■■■ THORNLEA REVITALIZATION AREA LAND USE STUDY AREA

▨▨▨▨ CANAC SITE





## Appendix A

### *PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING MINUTES THORNHILL (THORNLEA) REVITALIZATION*

**JANUARY 22, 2013 - 7:00 p.m.  
Council Chamber**

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#### **Attendance**

Mayor Frank Scarpitti  
Deputy Mayor Jack Heath  
Regional Councillor Jim Jones  
Regional Councillor Gord Landon  
Regional Councillor Joe Li  
Councillor Valerie Burke  
Councillor Howard Shore  
Councillor Don Hamilton  
Councillor Carolina Moretti  
Councillor Colin Campbell  
Councillor Alan Ho  
Councillor Logan Kanapathi

Ron Blake, Manager, West District  
Biju Karumanchery, Senior Development Manager  
Kitty Bavington, Council/Committee Coordinator

#### **Regrets**

Councillor Alex Chiu

The Public Information Meeting regarding the Thornhill (Thornlea) Revitalization convened at 8:50 PM in the Council Chamber with Councillor Don Hamilton in the Chair.

#### **DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

Councillor Valerie Burke disclosed an interest with respect to the subject of the Public Information Meeting, Thornhill Revitalization, by nature of a family owned business in the area, and did not take part in the discussion of or vote on the question of the approval of this matter.

#### **THORNHILL REVITALIZATION (10.0)**

##### **1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Councillor Howard Shore provided opening statements and expressed appreciation to the residents, staff, consultants, and Council members that have worked on this project. It was clarified that no decision will be made this evening.

## **2. PRESENTATION**

Ron Blake gave a brief overview of the process to date and the numerous Working Group meetings so far.

Nick McDonald, Meridan Planning Consultants Inc., gave a presentation regarding the project with respect to: the study area (34.1 ha); how the study evolved; current Official Plan policies and designations of General Industrial and Business Corridor; current zoning; the Interim Control By-law; Provincial Policy Statement; Growth Plan; Markham Employment Land Strategy (2009); and other factors to consider such as incompatibility of land uses, development of the Canac Kitchen site, legal non-conforming uses, provision of pedestrian linkages and community amenities, and impacts from the rail line. Mr. McDonald noted that there are significant competing views regarding the future of this area.

The consultant recommends that the land remain as an employment area with a transition to the surrounding residential uses. The intent would be to permit a broader range of service type uses such as offices and retail which will increase the vibrancy of the area. A Vision Statement was presented, promoting a mixture of businesses that are compatible with and complement surrounding residential communities.

## **3. DEPUTATIONS/SUBMISSIONS**

Written submissions were received from the Kmiec family; Perry Salter; and Gerald Owen.

Arnie Rose, representing the Working Group, gave an overview of the project and challenges involved, such as environmental, land use, and property standards issues. The Working Group provides a unique opportunity to advise Council. Mr. Rose stated their Vision Statement, "...to create a high quality neighbourhood" and provided a written copy.

Moujan Nabavi, representing the Working Group, provided a presentation and a hand-out that compared the objectives, principles, and recommendations of the Working Group and the consultant/staff report. He requested that their recommendations form the basis of development policies.

Manuel Der Haroutiounian, a member of the Working Group, advised that although he keeps his business up to standard, some businesses do not. He discussed the grandfathering clause that would allow legally non-conforming businesses to continue.

Steven Cassady, representing Kholer Company, spoke of the history of his company and principles of community responsibility. He spoke of efforts to revitalize the Canac site and the suitability of industry in this area. Appropriate zoning, tax incentives, and lost tax revenues were discussed. The owners of the Canac property are continuing to work with the community and the City to restore the property and to ensure appropriate development for adjacent properties.

Mark Yarranton of KLM Planning Partners, representing Kholer Company, spoke in support of transitional uses.

Brian Gordon, area resident, spoke of the significant issues and stated his support for the Working Group recommendations.

Elaine Sanders, area resident, spoke of the conditions of the neighbourhood and supported the Working Group, suggesting that manufacturing uses be eliminated. Ms. Sanders expressed concern for the discretionary uses proposed by the consultant. Mr. McDonald explained that an application and public consultation would be involved for any discretionary uses.

Arthur Donin, area resident, spoke in opposition to industrial uses, body shops, and cell towers.

Marlene Cooper, area resident, spoke in opposition to any use that produced noise or pollution.

Alena Gotz, representing Aileen Willowbrook Ratepayers Association, read statements in support of redevelopment of the Canac site. Ms. Gotz expressed concern for health impacts and encouraged revitalization that will eliminate pollution-causing industries by rezoning the area to commercial residential. Copies of two statements were provided.

Stan Kimick, area resident, spoke of noise issues relating to Raywall, and supported the recommendations of the Working Group.

Kayla Cooper, area resident, spoke of childhood memories involving the smells from industries and suggested it is not an appropriate use so close to residences.

Art Pozonyakov, area resident, supports the Working Group recommendations, and encouraged employment uses without industrial uses.

Frances DanKevy, owner or an area company, spoke of economic issues that impacted the family business and resulted in a car repair operation renting their building. The use is grandfathered. Ms. DanKevy stated they have worked hard to keep the property clean and noted that the lack of transit services is a deterrent to commercial development of the area.

Eric Lerner supported comments made by the Working Group.

Elizabeth Anne Hutchison, area resident, believes health issues have been affected by the pollution, and noted other issues of noise, barking dogs, and other complaints, and suggested By-law Enforcement must be more active. Ms. Hutchison prefers low-rise condos, seniors residents, and playgrounds, and no industries.

Robert Mintzberg, area resident, spoke on behalf of residents on McKelvey Drive adjacent to the Canac site and requested building height and setback provisions that would protect the neighbours. He stated concerns for health issues, safety, pollution, and noise.

Susan Eaton, owner of an area business, advised that she had not received notice of the revitalization Working Group meetings. Ms. Eaton stated that they operate a clean business and provide a vital service for the community. Ms. Eaton suggested that Canac and Raywall may not be appropriate in this area, but some businesses are needed and have nowhere else to go.

Staff clarified that the Region would play a large part in any decisions, as Markham already has a shortage of employment lands to meet the employment targets established by the Region.

The Committee responded to comments regarding transit and grandfathering of legal non-conforming uses. Staff will be preparing a recommendation report for Development Services Committee in approximately March, 2013, dealing with the revitalization in the context of the new Official Plan.

The Committee thanked those in attendance for their participation.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Public Information Meeting regarding the Thornhill Revitalization adjourned at 11:20 p.m.